



Advocating for teachers
and public education

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Dr. Linette Branham, Director
Donald E. Williams, Jr. Deputy Director
Capitol Place, Suite 500
21 Oak Street
Hartford, CT 06106
860-525-5641 800-842-4316
Fax 860-725-6328

An affiliate of the
National Education Association

Testimony of

Ray Rossomando

Connecticut Education Association

Before the

Education Committee

March 19, 2015

Re:

- HB 7024 AAC Measures For Calculating School And District Performance And Waivers Of Federal Law Sought By The Department Of Education**
- SB 1100 AAC The Elimination Of The Reporting And Collection Of Certain Student And Teacher Data**

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Ray Rossomando, Research and Policy Development Specialist for the Connecticut Education Association. CEA represents 43,000 active and retired teachers across the state.

CEA testifies in support of HB 7024 and SB 1100 in concept and direction. However, we believe that there are certain aspects of each that can be improved.

Together, HB 7024 and SB 1100 seek to align our school information that is used for state and federal accountability with the school profiles available to parents and the general public. They also represent a step forward in how Connecticut can meet state and federal accountability requirements, particularly with respect to indicators of school and district quality.

We applaud the work of the State Department of Education in this arena and appreciate recent opportunities to share our perspectives. We also

policymakers to consider broadening the criteria we use to determine whether schools are meeting their objectives. *In addition to the criteria already under consideration by SDE, our school accountability system should aspire to account for the multiple missions of schools. A new, more innovative accountability system must also consider these two critical objectives.*

- 1) To fully prepare students, our schools must focus on more than a score – they must provide all students the opportunity to:
 - Maximize their critical thinking skills
 - Employ creativity
 - Demonstrate an ability to collaborate and communicate effectively
 - Exhibit self-direction and persistence in the pursuit of continued learning and enrichment
 - Engage in civic, community, and global interests and issues.
- 2) To accomplish these student-focused objectives, Connecticut schools must also promote learning environments that are equitable, safe, welcoming, and engaging to students and their parents.

Although we support most provisions of HB 7024 and SB 1100, we do not support the removal of certain data from the Strategic School Profiles (SSP).

The data reported on the SSP appears to delete information about the presence of teacher's aides or paraprofessionals. We think this is important resource information that should remain on the SSP.

Apart from this specific concern, we believe that both bills move in a positive direction and urge policymakers to include teachers in further discussion about how best to determine the goals and indicators of school quality and success.

We also urge lawmakers to consider our comprehensive proposal aligning testing and accountability. By focusing on the student-centered objectives we propose, we have an opportunity to be bold, innovative, and a national leader in measuring school quality. CEA and our 43,000 teacher-members look forward to participating in that process.

Thank you.

look forward to future opportunities to collaborate with policymakers to establish more appropriate measures of school quality.

The work this far recognizes that Connecticut has invested far too many resources and too much learning time on single high-stakes standardized test scores – tests that serve only as a snapshot in time, and a dipstick on a school system. There is so much more to schooling, and the new measures begin to take that into consideration. But there is much more to be accomplished.

As we move forward, we hope that a new measure of school accountability will be able to address the many things we expect our schools to do. After all, tax payers spend billions of dollars on Connecticut schools and deserve an accountability system that recognizes the many goals that they expect their local schools to achieve.

CEA has offered a Testing and Accountability Bill that would accomplish this. Our proposal does this by first identifying, in statute, what it is that we expect our schools to do – our statewide goals of schooling. Only when we recognize the purpose of schooling can we truly measure schools' progress toward meeting goals.

Below is the specific language that we propose be added to statute to establish Connecticut's collective goal. It is informed by State Supreme Court decisions, as well as what is happening in innovative districts already. We propose amending 10-4a to include:

"The State of Connecticut, along with local and regional school districts within its jurisdiction, is responsible for the provision of substantially equal educational opportunity, pursuant to Article eighth of the Constitution of the State of Connecticut and subsection (b) of this statute. The State recognizes that all Connecticut students are entitled to an educational opportunity that prepares them to participate in democratic institutions, attain productive employment and to otherwise contribute to the state's economy, or to progress on to higher education. The state also recognizes the duty of public schools to address historical inequities experienced by students based on their race, ethnicity, or national origin that continue to inhibit opportunity for many of the state's children.

"In pursuit of these objectives, the State of Connecticut, acting through its executive offices and local and regional school districts, establishes the following guiding principles for its schools: to provide all students the opportunity to maximize their critical thinking skills; employ creativity; demonstrate an ability to collaborate and communicate effectively; exhibit self-direction in the pursuit of continued learning and enrichment; and engage in civic, community, and global interests and issues. The State of Connecticut is also committed to promoting learning environments that are equitable, safe, welcoming, and engaging to students and their parents."

As Connecticut finalizes its federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver application, which includes a new school accountability system, we urge state and legislative